Christian Sanctification
Pathway to Joy

I. Introduction – The book used as part of this study is Richard Phillips's Walking with God.

- **READ Psalm 16**

- I have no doubt that many of you here this morning, indeed perhaps the majority, know the answer to the first question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism. It is a very basic question, yet an incredibly important one.

- **What is the main purpose (or chief end) of man?**

- For many, the answer instantly comes to mind. Like a reflex, it is, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever."

- The 16th Psalm beautifully describes a man, a servant of the Lord, who fulfills humanity's ultimate purpose: to glorify and enjoy God.

- It is a description of a very **contented** and **JOYFUL** person. He says in verse 6, "**The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance."**

- **In verse 9 he says my "heart is glad."**

- **In verse 11, he says, "You will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand**."

- Joy and contentment are how one would describe this person.

- Now the question is, does this describe us this morning? **If we are Christians, it should!** After all, Christians—more than anyone else on earth—should know true contentment and true joy!

- Using Psalm 16 as our study basis, we focus our attention today on **the subject of Christian joy!**

- Psalm 32:11 instructs, "**Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart."**

- "**I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation," are the words of the prophet Habakkuk in Chapter 3:18 of his book**.

- Can a believer who is genuinely rejoicing in Christ and full of the joy of the Lord also be filled with sinful anger at the same time? **They are completely opposite**!

- So, we can say that Christian Joy is a great remedy for sinful anger.

- Christian joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Of course, we learn this from the Apostle Paul's letter to the Galatians, where he lists the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

- We see this in Galatians 5:22: "**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, JOY, peace, patience, etc., all the way to self-control**.

- The book of Acts of the Apostles often discusses the connection between the Holy Spirit and Christian Joy.

- Acts 13:52: "The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit."

- I believe we have all come across the phrase or saying, "Happiness Is." These are charming little expressions, **some less charming**, that we often spot on bumper stickers, signs, and various other places.

- "Happiness is a new car," "Happiness is a warm puppy," "Happiness is not having what you want. It is wanting what you have," and "Happiness is not a state to arrive at, but a manner of traveling." There are many more.

- For our study and discussion, I'd like to substitute that "Happiness Is" phrase with a "Christian Joy Is" phrase. Referencing Psalm 16 as our guide!

- I do so, not in the spirit of the cute little sayings that the world offers, but with hope in God, believing that by His grace, we might glean truth from His word and grow in the joy of the Lord.

- We should remind ourselves that, as in all growth in Christ, it is more than just following a list of to-dos! We are needy people who need the Holy Spirit!

- While Psalm 16 certainly contains much more, I will limit our study to only **three** "**Christian Joy Is" statements**.

    1. Christian Joy is a single-minded devotion to God.
    2. Christian Joy is living in the presence of the Lord.
    3. Christian Joy is found in reflecting and trusting in the promises of God.

II Christian Joy Is Single-Minded Devotion to God

- So, first, Christian Joy represents a single-minded devotion to God.

- This entire Psalm expresses a single-minded devotion to God. It primarily describes the Lord Jesus Christ and is considered one of the messianic Psalms.

- There has never been, and there will never be, a man as single-minded in his devotion to God as the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Although Jesus was known as a "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," he also understood the Joy of the Lord better than anyone else.

- Even at his birth, there was a proclamation of joy! Remember what the angels told the shepherds in the fields the night Jesus was born in Luke 2:10.

- "But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. **I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people."**

- Speaking to his disciples in John 15:9-11 Jesus could say:

- "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. **I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete**."

- So, first and foremost, Jesus knew the joy of the Lord. It is that same joy He has for His people.

- We know that Psalm 16 specifically refers to the Lord Jesus because of the Apostle Paul's reference in Acts 13 and the Apostle Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2. **Reading from Acts 2, Verse 22 – 28. SOMEONE READ**

- **22**"Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. **23**This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. **24**But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. **25David said about him**: (**Psalm 16:8-10)**"'I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. **26**Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope, **27**because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. **28**You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.' So David was NOT speaking of himself, he was speaking of the Savior!

- Christian joy, rooted in the greatest example of all— the Lord Jesus Christ— **springs from wholehearted devotion to God** and a single-minded focus on Him. It reflects a person completely surrendered to Christ!

- We see this complete surrender in all aspects of life, in the individual described in Psalm 16.

- **Verse 1**. The servant of God entrusts his security to God. "**Keep me safe, O God for in you I take refuge**."

- In Verse 2, there is a recognition that nothing on earth can compare to the blessings of knowing God. "You are my Lord; apart from you, I have no good." thing."

- We see this sentiment often in the Psalms. Psalm 113:5: "**Who is like** the LORD our God, the One **who** sits enthroned on high."

- In verse 3, the servant allies himself with the Lord's people, declaring, "They are the glorious ones." There is great joy in being with fellow brothers and sisters in Christ who love the Lord! As stated in Psalm 84:10, I would prefer to be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of the wicked."

- In verse 4, we observe a wholehearted devotion to God in worship. To the one true God alone belongs praise! **The sorrows of those will increase who run after other gods. I will not pour out their libations of blood or take up their names on my lips**."

- In all circumstances, he finds contentment and single-mindedness. Look at verses 5 and 6: "LORD, you have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely, I have a delightful inheritance."

- In Richard Phillip's book "Walking with God", in his chapter entitled "Pathway to Joy, he points out the indirectness of the Christian life that leads to the blessing of Christian joy.

- In other words, the servant of God in Psalm 16 did not aim to find happiness or joy. Instead, it was through his devotion to God that he discovered this blessing.

- **He writes**: "We are to worship him, not happiness; we are to find our joy in the Lord and not in things or circumstances.

- He goes on to quote from Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. If you have the book, **read the quote from PAGE 115 in Walking with God.**

- In the midst of seeking God with single-minded devotion, the results are blessings.

- Do we understand something about this single-minded devotion to God? Amid our busy lives, families, jobs, and relationships, are we, first and foremost, devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ? Are we completely committed to the Lord Jesus Christ?

- It is that person who understands the joy of the Lord!

- **Question:** Notice that we are NOT referring to happiness! **How would you distinguish happiness from the Joy of the Lord**?

- The 19th-century American evangelist D.L. Moody, a man fully surrendered to the Lord and greatly used by Him, had this to say about happiness and joy:

- "I think there is a difference between happiness and joy. Happiness is caused by things which happen around me, and circumstances will mar it, but joy flows right on through trouble; joy flows on through the dark; joy flows in the night as well as in the day; joy flows all through persecution and opposition; it flows right along, for it is an unceasing fountain bubbling up in the heart; a secret spring which the world can't see and don't know anything about; but the Lord gives His people perpetual joy when they walk in obedience to Him."

- The author, Richard Phillips seems to agree. He says, "**Spiritual joy does NOT depend on favorable outward circumstances; it is a gift of God's grace and can be experienced in every circumstance**."
- Do we know this joy? It is for those who are single-minded.

- **Do you have any questions or comments before we move on to the next statement about "Christian Joy"?**

III Christian Joy Is Living Life in the Lord's Presence

- Along with "Christian Joy is single-minded devotion to God," Psalm 16 also states that "**<u>Christian Joy is living life in the Lord's Presence</u>**."

- Verse 8: "**I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken**."

- **Psalm 73:27-28 -** "Those who are far from you will perish; you destroy all who are unfaithful to you**. But as for me, it is good to be near God**. I have made the Sovereign LORD my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds."

- Question to Class: How does a Christian set the Lord always before them? How does a Christian live life in the Lord's presence? How does a Christian, in the language of Psalm 73, draw near God?

- We live our lives with the constant awareness that God is with us. Nothing is too small or too large for God to control and guide in our lives for our good.

- Psalm 139 serves as an ideal example of being aware of the omniscience and presence of God. He lived his life with this understanding, which brings joy to the Christian. **Verses 1 - 6**

  "O LORD, you have searched me, and you know me. You know, when I sit and rise, you perceive my thoughts from afar. **3** You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue, you know it completely, O LORD. **5** You hem me in—behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. **6** Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is too lofty for me to grasp."

- Do we believe that mundane acts, such as sitting down and standing up, are too insignificant for God to care about? For the author of Psalm 139, such knowledge was too wonderful and too lofty for him to comprehend! When we contemplate how magnificent God is, this should inspire great Christian enthusiasm Joy!

- I hope we have not heard Romans 8:28 so many times that we fail to marvel at its significance! "**And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose**."

- God works for our good! If we truly believe that and live our lives in accordance with that truth, there is Christian joy! There is peace and comfort as well!

- **We also live life in the Lord's Presence by continually coming to him in worship, praise, and prayer**.

- In verse 7 of Psalm 16, we see the servant of God full of praise: "I will praise the Lord who counsels me." Praise and prayer again result in Christian Joy.

- **Psalm 9:2** "I will be glad and rejoice in you; I will sing praise to your name' O most high."

- Have you ever worshiped God, singing praises to Him, and before you know it, your heart is lifted up in joy? Oh, that we could experience more of that Joy!

- We see this **connection between praise and joy repeatedly** throughout Scripture, especially in the Psalms. Praise and Worship bring joy, and joy brings Praise and Worship!

- Psalm 71:23: "**My lips will shout for joy when I sing praise to you**— I, whom you have redeemed."

- **Psalm 100:2 - Worship** the **LORD** with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.

- On July 16th, 1876, Charles Haddon Spurgeon preached a message at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London entitled "The Secret of a Happy Life." I would like to mention two aspects of this sermon.

    1) Always living in the Lord's presence: Spurgeon stressed the importance of maintaining constant communion with God. He encouraged believers to engage in "holy business with heaven," which involves listening to God's word and speaking to Him in prayer.

    2) Always trusting in the Lord's presence: Spurgeon highlighted the significance of having confidence in God's nearness, love, and practical assistance. He stated that this trust leads to a sense of security and peace, knowing that God is always at one's right hand to provide care and support

- What great encouragement God gives us! What reason for Joy!!

- **Lastly, living life in the Lord's Presence means living life in His Word**!

- The Word of God brings Joy to the heart of the Christian.

- Listen to Psalm 19:8: The precepts (or the word) of the LORD are right, providing joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, bringing light to the eyes.

- The Holy Spirit brings Joy to the believer through the Word of God! If we are Christians, we know this. We delight in the Word!

- Psalm 119:143 Trouble and distress have come upon me, but your commands are my **delight.**

- How precious is the Word of God! Living in the Lord's presence means living life in His Word. It is our daily bread!

- **Questions, Thoughts, or comments** before we go on to the final "Christian Joy Is" statement?

IV Christian Joy is found in Reflecting and Trusting in the Promises of God.

- Lastly, from Psalm 16

> **Christian Joy is found in reflecting and trusting in the promises of God**.

- Psalm 119:162: "**I rejoice in your promise** like one who finds great spoil."

- There are at least two great promises in Psalm 16 that, when received by faith, should produce great hope and joy for the Christian.

- In Psalm 16, the servant of God reflects on and rejoices in the hope of the resurrection and eternal life with God.

- First, the resurrection. Psalm 16:9-10 states, "Therefore my heart is glad, and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay."

- Earlier, we noted that later revelation makes it clear this is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. His body did not see decay!

- While this refers to the Savior, Christians also partake in this resurrection and are meant to rejoice in it. Joy!

- Listen to Richard Phillips in "Walking with God."

- **READ the quote below. It is taken from PAGE 117** in the book "Walking with God."

- "The explicit cause of David's joy was this: that whatever might befall him in this life, death was not the end; the grave was not his final resting place. 'For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol or let your holy one see corruption. The same should be true for us because Christ's open tomb is the greatest source of joy in the world. It is by the resurrection that God overwhelms our every fear, wipes away every tear, overturns every injustice, removes every curse, and makes way for the blessing of his love. The resurrection tells us that God will not abandon us to our circumstances and that death and sorrow will not have the final say. Here is the power that broke the bands of death, a strength that meets our every need. It is the light that bursts from Jesus' tomb that inspired David to say, 'You make known to me the path of like.' And it is with confidence in God's power that we may speak of the glories yet ahead: 'In your presence, there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures for evermore." Psalm 16:11.

- What hope this should inspire! What joy the doctrine of the resurrection is meant to bring us! The fact that Jesus was raised proves Christians will share that experience.

- The Apostle Paul wrote to the **Corinthian Church in I Corinthians 6:1**

- "**By his power, God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also**."

- And in chapter **15:20 -22**

- **[20]But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. [21]For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. [22]For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive**

- **Does the hope of resurrection bring joy to your heart**?

- Lastly, the servant of God in Psalm 16 is filled with joy, hoping for eternal life with God!

- Verse 11: "You have made known to me the path of life; **you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand**."

- Brothers and sisters, eternal life in the presence of our Savior will be the joy of the Lord, lasting forever! Through the work of the Holy Spirit, we have glimpses of that joy today, but on that day, there will be eternal joy in Him presence!

- Do these promises bring you joy? Do we REJOICE in our SALVATION? **It is the source of great JOY in HEAVEN**!

- To summarize our study on Christian Joy, we have said:

- Christian Joy is a single-minded devotion to God.
- Christian Joy is living life in the Lord's presence.
- Christian Joy is found in Reflecting and Trusting in the Promises of God.

- May the Lord please help each of us grow in true JOY!

- Prayer (If the time allows, the **Hymn Jesus thou Joy would be very fitting**)